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THE ONE-LEG RESTING POSITION
(NILOTENSTELLUNG), IN AFRICA
AND ELSEWHERE

BY

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THE ONE-LEG RESTING POSITION (NILOTEN- STELLUNG) IN AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE

These pages deal with the resting position on one leg, which is best known, and probably also first became more generally known and discussed, in connection with the Nilotic and Nilo-Hamitic peoples in the White Nile area, and therefore is called — especially by German ethnologists — the Nilotic position (German = Nilotenstellung). In general one foot rests on the knee of the other leg, or immediately above it, sometimes even below it. Less frequently (e. g. among the Bisharin) the knee of the raised leg rests against the other knee, the lower part of the latter leg pointing backwards. It probably makes no difference which leg is stood on; thus in this case there seems to be no counterpart to “right-handed” and “left-handed”. Sometimes the leg is changed. As a rule a spear or a staff is held in one hand as a support — sometimes the support is grasped with both hands — but information has also been given about this position without a support, not only from the Batchioko in Angola (the only ones adduced by Schilde), but also from the Dinka, Kona (Yukun), Mendi etc. They can rest in this way for long periods, especially with the help of the support. Examples are given below.

This resting position is taken by men and boys, hardly ever by women (cf., however, the Raik Dinka below), among peoples who go barefooted, but there are also examples of sandal-shod feet (see fig. 1). In that case it is probably a matter of thin soft sandals. On the other hand, people with shoes in the proper sense will probably not adopt this position, for the foot would probably not find sufficient foothold. To a certain extent also breeches are an impediment.

European travellers in the White Nile area and in North-East Africa have mentioned and depicted this resting position since at least the 1860's. The first person to devote closer attention to it was W. Joest,

who not only adduced examples from Africa (Bisharin, Bari, Dinka, Shilluk, Nuer, Mittu-Madi, Masai) but also from Australia and the Veddas in Ceylon.¹ Forty years later the subject was taken up, as far as Africa was concerned, for more complete and thorough treatment by the well-informed, unfortunately prematurely deceased, German Africanist W. Schilde.² I had already had my attention directed to this "culture element" then, had collected information as to its occurrence and was able to give Dr. Schilde some particulars of which he was not aware. Since then I have made further notes and therefore venture to supplement Schilde's account with this little paper. In the cases where complete references to the literature are not given in this paper in the form of notes, they have already been given by Dr. Schilde, but where I considered that his information needed supplementing, I have done so from the sources cited by him.

I am indebted to Docent Sture Lagercrantz, Uppsala University, for many valuable references.

I will first present the African material, which is the most abundant, and then pass on to other continents.

AFRICA

My most northerly example is from the fellahs of Egypt. South of Luxor, in the district of Hizâm, Winkler observed — as he says he did several times in this district — the strange resting position of the fellahs in the field: "Sie standen da auf einem Bein, das andere Bein angezogen und mit der Sohle über dem Knie an das stehende Bein angestützt".³ He does not mention any support and has no pictures.

With regard to the Ancient Egyptians, see p. 16.

Dunbar says about the human figures on Nubian rock-engravings of various ages between Assuan and Wadi Halfa that "some stand on one leg with the other knee bent in the familiar Hadendoa attitude" (Sudan Notes and Records 1934, 143). Schilde (p. 134) cites this statement unreservedly and has shown it on his distribution map. But

¹ W. Joest, Die einbeinige Ruhestellung der Naturvölker, 107—109, 7 figs. Globus LXXI (1897).

² W. Schilde, Die Nilotenstellung. Zeitschr. f. Rassenkunde, V, 130—137, 1 fig., 1 map. Stuttgart 1937.

³ H. A. Winkler, Ägyptische Volkskunde, 29. Stuttgart 1936.



Fig. 1. Hadendoa? (By courtesy of Prof. E. E. Evans-Pritchard.)

immediately afterwards (p. 136) he repudiates it, referring to the illustrations in a later paper by Dunbar (*Sudan Notes*, etc. 1935, 303, pl. XI), and after having seen reproductions of these figures, I fully share Schilde's scepticism. Dunbar has perhaps become doubtful himself, for in his 1941 book, in which he reproduces a number of human figures, he does not, as far as I can find, mention the one-leg resting position.⁴

This position is well known from the Beja peoples: Bisharin, Hadendoa, Beni Amer. It is presumably also met with among the Ababde, although neither Schilde nor I have found any statements about it. The photograph (fig. 1) reproduced here, which was sent to me by Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard many years ago, is probably from the Hadendoa. Evans-Pritchard does not now remember its origin. The picture also has a certain interest in that the man is wearing sandals. In connection with his sketch of a Bishari man in Souakin, Mr. L. Lucas writes that "when I asked my subject to remain quiet and

⁴ *J. H. Dunbar*, *The rock-pictures of Lower Nubia*, 7, Pl. XXIII. Cairo 1941.



Fig. 2. Bishari of Souakin. (After L. Lucas.)

in an attitude of ease, he at once raised his left leg and rested it on the front part of the right knee. I never saw another of his tribe do the same, although I was among them three weeks. This is a favourite attitude of repose among some of the negro races of the southern parts of the White Nile — for example the Shillooks. I believe the man had never been beyond Khartoum”.⁵ Lucas’s sketch shows a man standing with his left foot resting on the right leg below the knee. He is supporting himself with a bent throwing-stick (fig. 2). The Bishari man whom Joest (op. cit.) reproduces from the tract of Thebe, is not resting his foot but his left knee against the right one, so that the left lower leg points backwards.

Professor Grottanelli, Rome, has told me that he saw this resting position “among Erythrean shepherds (Tigrinya-speaking cattle-breeders) in the highland of Hamasen, and possibly among the Bogos near Cheren. Of the former I am certain, but for the latter I could not swear”.

Further, there are statements from the Saho (Shoho), Kunama,⁶ Galla, probably the Arussi, in the neighbourhood of Lake Abiata, south of

⁵ Journal Anthropological Institute, VI, 191, Pl. 8. London 1877.

⁶ F. L. James, *The wild tribes of the Soudan*, pp. 85 (with a woodcut, engraved from a photograph, showing two men with spears), 137 (a young boy with a stick). London 1884. See also Globus, 47, 1885, p. 57 (after James).



Fig. 3. Ogaden Somali. "A favourite Somali attitude of rest". (After Jennings.)

Addis Abeba,⁷ Sidamo, Amarro east of Lake Chamo and south of Sidamo (they call themselves the Baditu).⁸ Possibly it is the Nilotic position that Cecchi refers to when he says that on the banks of the River Hawash he found 15-20 Soddo-Galla chiefs waiting for him, standing like bronze statues. Some were resting one foot on the spear, others assumed the characteristic position with crossed legs. C. writes: "... quali appoggiando un piede sulla lancia, quali incrociando una gamba sull'altra in modo tutto caratteristico, ...".⁹ There are also examples from the Ogaden-Somal¹⁰ (fig. 3) and the Somal of Cape Guardafui.

⁷ G. MacCreagh, *The last of free Africa*, Photo p. 76. New York 1935. "Tall Galla spearmen standing like storks" (nothing in the text).

⁸ Ad. E. Jensen, *Im Lande des Gada*. Stuttgart 1936. A drawing on p. 393 shows a man standing on his right leg with a spear in his right hand and under it "Charakteristische Stellung der Amarromänner". J. appears to have nothing about it in the text.

⁹ A. Cecchi, *Da Zeila alle frontiere del Caffa*, II, 15. Roma 1886. — Fünf Jahre in Ostafrika, 60. Leipzig 1888.

¹⁰ V. Bottego, *Il Giuba esplorato*, 66, drawing from a photo. Rome 1895. Révoil (*Globus* XLII, 374) has a photo of an Ogaden Somali standing on his right leg and supporting himself on a spear in each hand (not mentioned in the text). He has slipper-like sandals but has taken off the left one, so that the foot resting on the right knee is bare. Jennings has a photo of an Ogaden Somali: "A favourite Somali-attitude of rest" (fig. 3). He mentions nothing about it in the text but refers to the picture on p. 142, where the Ogaden tribe Rer Ugaz is mentioned. J. W. Jennings and C. Addison, *With the Abyssinians in Somaliland*, Pl. facing p. 237. London 1905. A photo of a Somali in "the favourite attitude of rest" is found in "Peoples of all Nations", I, 654.



Fig. 4. Raik Dinka girls. (After Titherington).

Schilde also includes the Issa-Somal and refers to de Poncins, but, as far as I can judge from the description by the latter, the one foot is not resting on the other leg, but the spear is the only support. As a rule the men spend their time squatting on their heels, he says: "Ils aiment aussi a causer appuyés sur la lance, une jambe reposant sur le bois qui passe alors sous de jarret et sur le cou-de-pied".¹¹

About the Nuba, Domville Fife writes: "Among the watching tribesmen [at inter-village wrestling matches] I noticed a number standing in the same manner as the Shilluks and Dinkas. While leaning sideways against a long stick they rest the right leg by raising it and placing the foot on the left knee, reversing the position when the left limb becomes tired. In this curious way they are able to stand without any apparent fatigue for hours at a time".¹² Dr. Nadel has informed me that, during his stay among the Nuba, he often observed the one-leg resting position among the Korongo tribe, but only among them.

We will now pass on to the Nilotes and Nilo-Hamites, or to quote Prof. W. Schmidt, the Hamitoids.

¹¹ *E. de Poncins, Voyage au Choa. Explorations au Somal et chez les Danakils. Bull. Soc. Géogr. XIX, 438. Paris 1898.*

¹² *C. W. Domville Fife, Savage life in the Black Sudan, 265. London 1927. As far as I can see S. F. Nadel does not mention the resting position in "The Nuba", Oxford 1947.*

The Raik (Reik) Dinka "have the habit of standing at ease on one leg only, with the other foot resting on the knee, balance is assisted with a spear or stick".¹³ However, although he does not mention it in the text, Major Titherington has a photograph showing five Raik girls (fig. 4) standing in a row, the central one standing on the left leg, not supporting the foot against the knee of the other leg but knee against knee, the right lower leg pointing backwards and obliquely upwards (Pl. XIX.) Millais has a drawing of a "Cheesh" Dinka (near Lake Eyroll) standing without any support on his right leg, with the other foot below the right knee and with a spear in his left hand resting over his shoulder.¹⁴ A Kitsh man on one leg is to be seen on a wall-painting in the Natural History Museum in Vienna.¹⁵ According to K. Weule, etc. the Kitsh are a Dinka tribe, probably identical with Millais' Cheesh and Seligman's Cic.¹⁶ According to Paulitschke, the "Kietsch" live between 6° and 8° north, which tallies with the Cic on Seligman's map.¹⁷

We pass on to the Shilluk,¹⁸ Nuer,¹⁹ Bari (fig. 5), Shir and Mittu (Wetu). Marno has a drawing of a Bari man from Gebel Regaf (Rejaf) herding cattle, standing on his left leg with the right foot against the knee and supporting himself on a staff.²⁰ Long's observation when he marched through the "Mögi country" is probably about the Bari: "The

¹³ G. W. Titherington, The Raik Dinka of Bahr El Ghazal Province. Sudan Notes and Records, X, 1927, p. 178, Pl. XX.

¹⁴ J. G. Millais, Far away up the Nile, Pl. pp. 152, 154. London 1924. Cf. photo in R. Biasutti, Le Razze e i popoli della terra, II, 247, Torino 1941: "Ragazzo Denca nella tipica posizione di riposo". Cf. E. de Pruyssenaere's Reisen und Forschungen im Gebiete des Weissen u. Blauen Nil. Petermann's Mitteil. Erg. Heft. 50, p. 27. Gotha 1877. E. v. Rosen, Träskfolket, Pl. 14. Stockholm 1918.

¹⁵ After a sketch by W. Harnier, reproduced in W. Schmidt and W. Koppers, Völker und Kulturen, I, Pl. 24, p. 496. Regensburg 1924.

¹⁶ C. G. and Brenda Z. Seligman, Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan. London 1932.

¹⁷ P. Paulitschke, Die Sudanländer, 237. Freiburg 1885.

¹⁸ L. Tangye, In the torrid Sudan, Pl. p. 198. London 1910. On p. 159 T. says about the Nilotes (without indicating any special tribe) that a number of naked young men are in the habit of standing on one leg "while they balance themselves with the aid of a down-pointed spear, the tip of which is protected by a piece of soft ambatch-wood".

¹⁹ L. Tangye, *op. cit.*, photos facing p. 234, Nuer-youth and p. 270 older man (not mentioned in the text). Cf. H. A. Bernatzik, Gari-Gari, fig. 27, London 1930, and J. G. Wibom, Jaktminnen från Nilen och Giraffloden, fig. p. 50, Stockholm 1914: "My Nuer hunting companions. One Nuer is standing on one leg — their usual way of resting".

²⁰ E. Marno, Reise in d. Egypt. Aequatorial-Provinz und in Kordofan 1874—76, p. 57. Wien 1878. See also p. 85: A Bari man from the Rejo Mountains w. of Rejaf, on the border to the Nyam-Nyam. S. W. Baker has a similar drawing, "the usual



Fig. 5. Bari. (By courtesy of Prof. L. Cipriani.)

Mögi gathered in great numbers on our flank, standing in token of peaceful intentions, with the hollow of the right foot resting upon the left knee, and leaning upon their lances”.²¹ On his map Mögi lies about 40 miles south of Rejaf on the Nile just north of 4° north.

From the Shir, Baker describes (op. cit. 63) “the men’s favourite attitude when standing”. The Shir he refers to live near Gebel Lardo, immediately north of Gondokoro on the left bank of the Nile. They speak the Bari language and are influenced culturally by the Bari, but are more engaged in tilling the soil than the latter.

Petherick reproduces a drawing of a Djibba, usually called Beir or Ajiba nowadays, a man standing on his left leg, with a sword in his left hand as a support and holding in the other a weapon of wood recalling a golf club, which is typical of this people. He reproduces

attitude of the men”, in “The Albert N’Yanza”, I, 90, London 1866 (no mention in the text).

²¹ C. Chaillé Long, *Central Africa*, 208. London 1876.

the same man on the covers of the two volumes of his book but makes no mention in the text.²² The Beir live south of the River Sobat and from the point of view of language belong to the Didinga group (cf. below).

Further we note this resting position from the Madi, Latuka, Acholi (Shuli),²³ Lur, Didinga, Lango, Turkana, Suk, Nandi,²⁴ and probably also from the latter's kinsmen the Elgoni, on Eastern Mount Elgon,²⁵ the Bantu people Bagishu (Masaba) on the western slopes of Mount Elgon,²⁶ the Bantu-Kavirondo (I have seen the position there myself, but do not now remember among which tribe), the Nilotic Jaluo,²⁷ the Bantu people Shasi north of Speke Gulf, the Ikizu,²⁸ the Masai and Ndorobo. In a forest between Londiani (a station on the Kenya-Uganda line) and Eldoret I saw a Ndorobo boy in the resting position on one leg (fig. 6). Further, the Mosiro Ndorobo in Tanganyika S. E. of Kilimandjaro. To the series may be added the Akikuyu and the Taveta (I myself cannot remember this resting position from the latter, whom I visited in 1912). Schilde refers to Routledge for the Kikuyu, and I add here what Baroness Blixen says about the old Kikuyu man Kaninu, a squatter on her farm, with his daughters married to Masai in the district. One day he came and asked to speak to her. "I found him standing outside the house on one leg in a dignified position".²⁹

We proceed to the Bahima (Huma) and Batussi in Ankole, Ruanda³⁰ and Urundi. About the Bahima in Ankole Roscoe writes: "The herds-

²² *Petherick*, *Travels in Central Africa*, II, 6. London 1869.

²³ The two men, one standing on the right and the other on the left leg, which Buschan reproduces under the designation of "Ethiopians" are probably Acholi. *G. Buschan*, *Sitten der Völker*, III, fig. 84. Stuttgart undated.

²⁴ "A favourite attitude of these men [the herdsmen] is to stand on one leg, with the other raised and the sole of the foot placed on the calf or the knee of the supporting leg, while they lean on their spear or stick". *C. Hollis*, *The Nandi*, 20, Oxford 1909.

²⁵ Cf. *F. Bryk*, *Neger-Eros*, fig. 42. Berlin 1928.

²⁶ *J. B. Purvis*, *Through Uganda to Mount Elgon*, Pl. p. 294. London 1909 (not mentioned in the text).

²⁷ *C. W. Hobley*, *Eastern Uganda, an ethnological study*, 32. London 1902.

²⁸ The example consists of a photograph in Thurnwald's work: a boy standing on his left leg, supporting himself on a stick and looking at a "War dance of Ikizu-men" (nothing in the text). The Ikizu country lies inside the Speke Gulf, and, according to Thurnwald, the population derives from four different tribes: Ja-luo, the Sukuma, the Ikizu and the Jita. *R. Thurnwald*, *Black and white in East Africa*, 46, Pl. XIV. London 1935. T. has also reproduced this photograph in *Die menschliche Gesellschaft*, II, Pl. 12. Berlin 1932.

²⁹ *K. Blixen*, *Afrikansk pastoral*, 177. Stockholm 1938 (Swedish edition). French edition (*La ferme africaine*). Paris 1942.

³⁰ *T. A. Barns*, *The wonderland of the Eastern Congo*, Pl. facing p. 47. London 1922. A boy with his left foot against the right leg immediately above the knee



Fig. 6. Ndorobo, Kenya Colony. (Ingeborg Lindblom, phot., 1920.)

men are armed with one or two spears, and with a long stick to drive the cattle (the men stand at various parts of the herd). They have a peculiar habit of standing on one leg with the other raised and the sole of the foot placed on the calf of the supporting leg, while they lean on their spear or cow staff; frequently, one man stands, whilst the others squat about on their haunches".³¹ According to Hans Meyer (1916) in Urundi this position is not very frequent. After Meyer, whom Joest cites in his paper, Schilde also includes the Wanika (Wanyika or Poka) south-east of Lake Tanganyika and south of Lake Rukwa.

The southernmost examples, as far as South-East Africa is concerned, which I have met with, are from the Baila and perhaps also

and supporting himself on a stick held in his right hand. Burton reproduces a boy from the latter part of his route from Zanzibar to Ujiji but makes no mention of it in the text. *R. Burton*, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, II, 378. London 1860.

³¹ *J. Roscoe*, *The Bahima*. *Journal Anthropological Institute* 1907, 95.

from the Batonga, south of them in Rhodesia. Examples of the latter are given by Cipriani in a photograph in "Le antiche rovine e miniere della Rhodesia", Pl. XXXVI, fig. 64, Florence 1932. However, it should be noted that, in an article in "L'Universo", Cipriani reproduces exactly the same photograph with the caption "Consueta posa de riposo dei Baila che accentua la loro rassomiglianza coi Denka dell'Alto Nilo".³²

I have not found any statements from further south, and in answer to my inquiry, Miss M. Shaw, of The South African Museum, answered: "I have not heard of the custom of standing on one leg when resting in South Africa. Our people usually squat on their haunches". (Letter from Miss Shaw, M. A., 12. 7. 1946).

However, Schilde gives two further examples from these parts, both of which appear to be of *ceremonial or ritual significance*. One is from the northern Shona tribe of Korekore (after C. Bullock, 1927): The new chief of Nemakonde watches the whole night standing on one leg and holding a pole on the sacred mountain of his forefathers. The other example is from the Angoni in British Central Africa (after Stannus, J. A. I. 1910, 316): The body of a deceased chief "was arranged in a sitting posture covered with cloth, the eyes open, a stream was dammed up with stones and then a pyre made below the dam and the body burnt, the waters were then let free to wash away the ashes. The new chief stood from morning to afternoon on one foot wrapped in the smoke of the pyre".

We continue to West Africa, beginning from the south. Among the Kuanyama in Southern Angola Thiebaud took a photograph of a young shepherd (he looks like a boy) standing on one leg — "une pose qui les noirs prennent souvent" — and supporting himself on his bow. He is not mentioned in the text.³³ In a later work Delachaux depicts a young herdsman of the Humbe tribe, related to the Kuanyama: "Jeune berger humbe en position de repos, le pied droit appuyé sur la cuisse gauche, geste qui l'on voit déjà sur les monuments égyptiens. Humbe (Photo. 34. 11)".³⁴

³² L'Universo, Anno XI, N. 7 (July 1930), p. 1.

³³ T. H. Delachaux et Ch.-E. Thiebaud, Pays et peuplades d'Angola, Pl. 9. Neuchâtel. Paris 1934.

³⁴ T. Delachaux, Ethnographie de la Région du Cunène, 104, Pl. LXXI: 2. Neuchâtel 1936. Extrait du Bulletin de la Soc. Neuchâteloise de Géographie, T. XLIV, vol. II. 1936

Delachaux says categorically that the one-leg resting position is reproduced in Ancient Egyptian monuments, something which in itself does not appear to me to be improbable. However, I do not know where he obtained his information, and as I am not an Egyptologist, I have asked Mrs. G. Lugn, head of the Egyptian Museum in Stockholm, who states that she does not know this resting position, with one leg raised, from Ancient Egypt. The nearest she could find was that on some pictures a man is standing on one leg and supporting perhaps the point of the foot against the heel of the other leg. Mrs. Lugn refers, *inter alia*, to the painted relief on limestone from El Amarna, which shows King Amenophis IV and his consort in the garden. The King is standing, supported on a long staff, on his right leg with the tip of the toe of his left foot on the ground or perhaps against the heel of the other foot.⁸⁵

From the Batshioko (Batyokwe) in Angola we have Schachtzabel's photograph showing the son of a chief from the village of Kalenga, who is standing in front of a hut without support. S. says nothing about it in the text.⁸⁶

From H. Baumann, who bases himself on J. Plancquaert (1932) — to whose work I have not had access — Schilde (p. 135) cites a statement from the Bayaka that "die Knaben während der Initiationsriten die aufgehende Sonne in einbeiniger Stellung ansingen". In his paper Baumann recalls the connection between the cult of the sun and circumcision, but he does not go into what connection the one-leg position may have with them."⁸⁷

In the Ethnographical Museum in Stockholm there is a photograph taken by J. Öhrneman, a Swedish missionary, from the pygmoid Babongo in the forests north of Sibiti, in French Equatorial Africa (French Congo), showing a crowd of men and boys carrying hunting-nets (fig. 7). An older man is standing on his left leg supporting himself with his right hand against a hut. Another missionary, B. Söderberg, called my attention to this photograph.

⁸⁵ H. Schäfer & W. Andrae, *Die Kunst des alten Orients*. Propyläen-Kunstgeschichte, II, 362. Berlin 1925. Also reproduced in H. Schäfer, *Amarna in Religion und Kunst*, Pl. 33. Berlin 1931.

⁸⁶ A. Schachtzabel, *Im Hochland von Angola*, Pl. XX, p. 177. Dresden 1923. *Schachtzabel*, Angola, Pl. 34, p. 153. Berlin 1926.

⁸⁷ H. Baumann, *Die Mannbarkeitsfeiern bei den Tschokwe*. Baessler Archiv XV, 50. Berlin 1932.



Fig. 7. Babongo, French Equatorial Africa, with hunting-nets.
(J. Ohneman, phot., 1927.)

From the Cameroons, Morgen speaks about the “Ndumba” people south of Ngila (north of the central course of the Sanaga and north of Yaunde): “Als charakteristisch will ich noch hervorheben, dass die Leute hier, wie Dr. Schweinfurth es von den Niam-Niam’s erwähnt, auf einem Beine stehen und die Fusshohle des anderen gegen das Knie des ersteren lehnen”.³⁸ Schilde includes Morgen’s statement in his paper as referring to the Wute, which is undoubtedly correct. Ndumba is the capital town of the Wute tribe.³⁹

Meek has a photograph of a young Kona man — the Kona are a branch of the Jukun of Nigeria — standing on his left leg without support (fig. 8).⁴⁰ Unfortunately M. makes no mention of it in the text, as far as I can see.

³⁸ *Morgen* in *Mitteil. aus d. Deutsch. Schutzgeb.* III, 121. Berlin 1890.

³⁹ *J. Sieber*, *Die Wute*, 1. Berlin 1925.

⁴⁰ *C. K. Meek*, *A Sudanese Kingdom*, Pl. XVII, p. 218. London 1931.



Fig. 8. Kona youth, "resting himself", Nigeria. (After Meek.)

From the Lobi there is an example in the form of a photograph (Schilde refers to it in his paper): "Vieillard au repos". An old man is standing on his left leg with his right foot against the knee of that leg and is supporting himself on a stick held in the right hand.⁴¹

Thanks to Dr. S. Lagercrantz, I can also adduce an example from the Gouro on the Ivory Coast, but that, too, only in the form of a photograph. A little boy in the Gouro village of Elengué is standing on his left leg and apparently supporting himself with his left hand against a woman standing beside him.⁴²

Schomburgk has a photograph of a Gola man, Liberia, one of his native hunters, who is standing on his left leg with the right foot against the left knee, supporting himself on his gun.⁴³ From a Susu

⁴¹ E. Ruelle, Notes sur quelques populations noires de l'Afrique Occidentale Française. L'Anthropologie 15, p. 560. Paris 1904.

⁴² M. J. Eysséric, Rapport sur une mission scientifique à la Côte d'Ivoire, N. Archives des Missions scientifiques. T. IX. Paris 1899.

⁴³ H. Schomburgk, Bwakukama, 158. Berlin 1922.

village in Sierra Leone, Migeod reproduces some drawings on the walls of a house, on the inside, "done with a finger in white, no doubt by the boys . . . There was one man standing sideways on one leg, with the other foot drawn up to his knee, a pose I had not seen anywhere before".⁴⁴ Migeod's conception of the figure (who is standing without support) is undoubtedly correct. Further, I have a communication from Sierra Leone in the form of a European drawing, showing a boy — judging from the context, probably a Mendi — standing on his left leg with his hands on his sides with the caption "resting".⁴⁵

Professor Grottanelli has kindly given me an example from the Coniagi in Portuguese Guinea, in the form of a photographic reproduction showing a herdsman standing on one leg with the other foot placed below the knee.⁴⁶

ASIA, EUROPE AND THE SOUTH SEAS

The one-leg resting position is exemplified from India. von Eickstedt mentions in passing that it is "besonders bei den Hirtenvölkern aus den negriden Rassenkreis zu finden (z. B. bei Sudaniden, Palinegriden, Koliden u. a.)".⁴⁷ He gives no detailed examples from the "Koliden".

Professor W. Koppers has been kind enough to send a photograph, taken by him in 1939, of a "Lesser Bhilala, youthful herd at rest, Barwani state, Western Central India" (fig. 9). The Bhilalas, Koppers says, "claim to be descended from Rajput men married to Bhil women. However this may be, the fact remains that the Bhilalas rank higher than the Bhils, with whom they will not intermarry".⁴⁸ The Bhilalas are divided into two endogamous groups, the "Greater" and the "Lesser", of which the former are more Hinduised than the others and rank higher in the social order, as Koppers says. He has told me that he observed this resting position among the Bhils too.

⁴⁴ F. W. Migeod, *A view of Sierra Leone*, 54. London 1926. Schilde observed this statement.

⁴⁵ C. Singer and C. L. Baldridge, *White Africans and Black*, p. 12. Methodist book depot, Cape Coast (undated).

⁴⁶ M. de Lestrang, *Coniagui*, p. 77. Paris 1948. No mention in the text.

⁴⁷ E. v. Eickstedt, *Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte d. Menschheit*, 503. Stuttgart 1934.

⁴⁸ W. Koppers, *India and dual organization*, *Acta Tropica*, I, 78, fig. 5. Basel 1944.



Fig. 9. Lesser Bhilala, "youthful herd at rest". (By courtesy of the photographer, Prof. W. Koppers.)

Mr. J. M. Ollén, Stockholm, publishes a photograph of an elderly man standing on his right leg, with the left foot resting in the hollow behind the knee. He is standing without any support, with his hands clasped. Below the picture it says only "one of the lowest". Judging from the context, however, the picture appears to be from Betul, the Swedish mission station in the Central Provinces.⁴⁹ The inhabitants of the district consist of some Gonds but principally of Hindus.

Further examples could certainly be found if time was taken to go through the literature on India. The resting position, I have been told, can be observed, for instance, in individuals in a crowd listening to an open-air speaker. Professor Y. Laurell has informed me that — on a journey home from China — on the quays at Bombay and Karachi and outside those towns, he saw coolies standing with the sole of the foot against the in-side of the other leg below the knee, with or without supports. This position can also be seen among the Indian "fakirs".

⁴⁹ J. M. Ollén, *Svenska missionsbragder*, II, 165. Stockholm 1920.

A woodcut in an old Swedish popular paper shows a fakir in Calcutta "performing his devotions", standing on his left leg without support and with his hands folded. "He worships God by standing on one leg for many hours at a time".⁵⁰ It is here probably not a question of any real rest, but one of the fakir's mortifications or something of that kind.

It may be added here that a Dommara acrobat, photographed by Thurston at Tarikeri in Mysore, who is balancing on one leg at the top of a long bamboo pole, has perhaps taken up this position to show that he is resting as it were, i. e. a sign of his skill.⁵¹

Joest adduces an example from the Veddas in Ceylon (op. cit. 109), from the two Sarasins (1893): the sole of the foot is supported against the knee and in his hands the man is holding his axe, the end of the handle resting on the ground. I have found no information in Seligman's great monograph on the Veddas (1911).

Von Fürer-Haimendorf publishes a photograph of two Naga men, to be exact Konyak Naga from the village of Wakching: one is standing on his right leg with the other foot against its knee and is supporting himself on a stick, but there is no mention of it in the text.⁵² As far as I can find, Hutton does not mention anything from the Naga groups he studied.

The above heading "Europe" perhaps arouses surprise, but I have an example from that continent for which I have Dr. Lagercrantz to thank, and as it is from the gypsies, I mention it here under India. The statement is by Block, and I quote him: "Les Tziganes pratiquent une manière tout à fait particulière de reposer les jambes . . . un temps considerable".⁵³ Block here speaks about gypsies without any reservation, but under a photograph facing p. 161 (fig. 10 in my paper), showing a man standing on one leg, he writes: "Quelques *Rudari* apportent leurs marchandises au marché. Remarquer la façon de se reposer sur une jambe" and under a photograph reproduced by the side of this picture, he asks: "Sont-ce des Tziganes? Il ne semblerait

⁵⁰ H. Annerstedt, Ett besök i Calcutta. »Förr och Nu», VII, 220. Stockholm 1876. Prof. Laurell gave me this information.

⁵¹ E. Thurston, Castes and tribes of Southern India, II, 185, 190. Madras 1909.

⁵² Ch. v. Fürer-Haimendorf, Die nackten Nagas, fig. 9. Leipzig 1939. The English edition (The naked Nagas, 1939) is not accessible to me.

⁵³ M. Block, Moeurs et coutumes des Tziganes, 72, Pl. facing p. 161. Paris 1936. See also the German original edition "Zigeuner", fig 82, p. 53. Leipzig 1936.



Fig. 10. Gypsy (Rudari), Roumania. (After M. Block.)

pas. Visage, tenue, vêtements en font douter. Ces hommes sont des *Rudari*, de Zlacu ou de La Glod, très haut dans les Carpathes, entre Pietrosita et Sinaia." Here I will only point to Block's doubt as to the relationship of the gypsies with the Rudari or Bagesi (he calls them "forest gypsies"), as they are called in certain parts of Roumania. I have no reason to go into this question.⁵⁴

Time does not permit me to search for our resting position in the abundant literature on the gypsies. A study, of, e. g., the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (Edinburgh) and its "Monographs" would perhaps be worth the trouble. I would only add here that, in a photograph of a crowd of gypsies (belonging to the Lovara group) who were passing through Belgium, one man is standing barefoot on his right leg with the other leg resting above that knee. He is supporting himself against a young man with his left arm round the shoulders of the latter.⁵⁵

This resting position is also met with in China. Professor Laurell, who lived in China for 27 years, often saw in many places — Peking, Taiyuanfu, Shanghai, etc. — coolies standing on one leg with their carrying-poles as supports.

⁵⁴ On the Rudari see further Block, 108, 109, 141 et seq. and the index to the original German edition.

⁵⁵ *J. Joors*, Reminiscences of the Lovara. Journal Gypsy Lore Soc., XXIV, 11. Edinburgh 1945.



Fig. 11. Toradja, Ceylon. (After F. Sarasin.)

Thanks to an intimation by Dr. H. Wassén of the Ethnographical Museum, Gothenburg, I can adduce an example from Indonesia, from Celebes. The two Sarasins photographed a Toradja youth "Prince Dampo of Kulawi", who is supporting himself on a lance "wenn er still stand, wobei er dann den rechten Fuss gegen das lenke Knie stemmte"⁵⁶ (fig. 11). Although the authors clearly found this position

⁵⁶ P. and F. Sarasin, *Reisen in Celebes*, II, fig. 11. Wiesbaden 1905. The photograph is also reproduced in F. Sarasin, *Führer durch das Museum f. Völkerkunde*,

remarkable — the youth is also reproduced on the cover of vol. II of their book of travels — they do not appear to say anything about its occurrence among the Toradja. Nor have I been able to find any statement in Kaudern, who, in a drawing of a large stone image (*Kalamba*) from Central Celebes, in the neighbourhood of the Tavelia River (west of Lake Poso), placed a young man beside it to show the scale. The youth is standing on his left leg without any support with the other foot against the knee.⁵⁷ Possibly it is the same man in a photograph which Dr. Wassén has been kind enough to send me, showing a young man standing on his right leg, without support, by the side of a broken so-called *kalamba*, by the River Koro in the Baba country, Central Celebes, west of Lake Poso (photograph in the Ethnographical Museum, Gothenburg).

There are further examples of the one-leg resting position from New Guinea. Joest refers to Semon, who has a photograph (nothing in the text) of a group of Papuan men and boys in the large village of Aroma (really a district consisting of fourteen villages) lying on the coast a little west of Cloudy Bay and inside the island of Coutance. A boy in the group is standing on his left leg, with the other foot against the in-side of the thigh immediately above the knee. He is supporting himself against a pole of one of the huts.⁵⁸

In his work, referred to above, Tangye says (p. 159) that "this attitude is reported by Dr. Seligman to have its counterpart among the Toro tribes of New Guinea". For my part I do not know of any Toro tribe. Can it possibly be a printer's error for Roro? Seligman deals with this tribe in "The Melanesians of British New Guinea" (Cambridge 1910), but, as far as I can find, the resting position in question is not mentioned there.

Joest also has a statement from Australia, from C. Lumholtz, i. e. from Queensland. Lumholtz writes that he "often witnessed this extremely peculiar resting position" when the men were resting. He has two woodcuts showing three young men, two of whom (on the same picture) are supporting themselves on their spears, while the

Celebes, fig. 9. Basel 1936, and by W. Kaudern, The noble families or Maradika of Koelawi, Central Celebes, Etnologiska studier 11, fig. 29 (Idompo, "Prinz Dampo"), Göteborg 1940.

⁵⁷ W. Kaudern, I Celebes obygyder, II, fig. 52. Stockholm 1921.

⁵⁸ R. Semon, Im austral. Busch und an d. Küsten des Korallenmeeres, 386. Leipzig 1896.



Fig. 12. Man of the Mangula tribe, Kimberley district, North Australia. (Y. Laurell, phot., 1912.)

third, who has a boomerang in his hand, is standing on one leg without any support. Joest is of the opinion that the latter fact is due to an oversight on the part of the wood-carver, but in that he is certainly doing the latter an injustice. E. Mjöberg reproduces a photograph of a man from the River Coleman, North Queensland, who is standing on his right leg without support and without anything in his hands, and with his left hand against the thigh of the left leg. He says nothing about it in the text, but the caption below the picture runs: "the native rests for some minutes, tired after the long day's march".⁵⁹ Y. Laurell who made an expedition to the Kimberley district in North Australia in 1911—12 on behalf of the Ethnographical Museum of Stockholm,

⁵⁹ E. Mjöberg, *Bland stenåldersmänniskor i Queenslands vildmarker*, 385. Stockholm 1918.



Fig. 13. Chocó Indians, Rio Docordó, W. Colombia. (By courtesy of the photographer, Dr. H. Wassén, 1934.)

has informed me that there, and on Sunday Island also, he often saw men (never women) resting in that way, with or without a support (a spear or a *woomera*). I reproduce one of his photographs from the Mangula tribe, in the desert regions (Mt. Alexander) about 80 miles south of the Fitzroy River (fig. 12).

A more thorough search through the literature on the natives of Australia would certainly yield further information. I would only add that I have not found any in the great works by Spencer and Gillens or Howitt.

SOUTH AMERICA

Neither Joest nor Schilde give any information about the "Nilotic position" from South America, and yet it hardly seems unusual there. I am indebted to Dr. S. Rydén and Dr. H. Wassén, the Gothenburg Ethnographical Museum and to G. Webe, B. A., Stockholm, for some of the following items of information.

Fig. 14. Siriono Indians, Eastern Bolivia. (By courtesy of the photographer, Dr. S. Rydén.)



G. Bolinder has a photograph of some Chimila Indians outside a hut in the forests round the River Ariguani, North Colombia. A man and a woman are sitting on the ground, a woman and a boy standing, the latter on his left leg with the right foot against the left knee and holding on to a small tree with his left hand (nothing in the text).⁶⁰

On one of Krause's photographs of Šavajé Indians on the middle course of the River Araguaya, Brazil (a group of men and youths), a young man is standing close to a hut and leaning against it, on his right leg with the sole of the other foot against its knee.⁶¹

In 1934 among the Chocó Indians (Nomaná-Chocó), on the River Docordó, Western Colombia, Dr. Wassén took a photograph, reproduced here (fig. 13), which he has been kind enough to place at my disposal. He writes: "I observed on other occasions also that the Chocó Indians rested by standing on one leg, but I would not characterize it as in any way usual".

Dr. Rydén has placed at my disposal a photograph of Siriono Indians (fig. 14) from the district of Casarabe (east of Trinidad), Eastern Bolivia.

⁶⁰ G. Bolinder, *Die letzten Chimila-Indianer*, Ymer, 227, fig. 18. Stockholm 1924.

⁶¹ F. Krause, *In den Wildnissen Brasiliens*, Pl. 30: 4. Leipzig 1911.



Fig. 15. Ashluslay, Rio Pilcomayo, Bolivian Chaco. (E. Nordenskiöld, phot., 1908.)

From the Huari Indians in the Rio Guaporé and Rio Paraguay area, the border districts between Bolivia and Brazil, E. Nordenskiöld publishes a photograph of a man standing on his left leg without a support, holding on to the raised thigh with his right hand and with his left hand at his side. The caption: "Huari Indian. He is standing, as is seen, on one leg. This is an ordinary resting position among these Indians" (nothing in the text).⁶²

In 1908, among the Ashluslay on the Rio Pilcomayo in Bolivian Chaco, Nordenskiöld took a photograph of a "resting Indian" (fig. 15). I have to thank Dr. K. G. Izikowitz, the head of the Gothenburg Ethnographical Museum, for placing a copy at my disposal.

Becker has a photograph from the Lengua in Chaco Boreal, east of the Ashlushlay, showing "the resting position of a Lengua": A young man is standing on his left leg with the sole of his right foot

⁶² E. Nordenskiöld, *Forskningar och äventyr i Sydamerika*, fig. 145, p. 354. Stockholm 1915.

against the left knee, supporting himself on a bow held in his left hand.⁶³ No mention in the text.

I have still another example from Paraguay, also consisting of a photograph, from the Caingua Indians, neighbours of the Guayaquis and living in the same wooded mountain districts as they. The photograph shows a group of women and children and one man, the latter standing on his right leg with his left hand against the thigh of the raised leg, apparently without any support (nothing in the text).⁶⁴

Dr. Rydén writes to me that he is convinced that many statements about this resting position in South America can be found, especially from the Amazon area, if the literature is gone through. I share his view completely but confine myself here to the examples adduced above and leave it to an Americanist to deal with this subject, as far as America is concerned, in a monograph.

⁶³ *H. v. Becker*, *Lengua und Kaiotuguí*. Zeitschr. f. Ethnologie 1941, fig. p. 375. Berlin 1944.

⁶⁴ *Ch. De la Hitte et H. Ten Kate*, *Notes ethnographiques sur les Indiens Guayaquis*. Anales del Museo de la Plata, II, Pl. 2, fig. 7. La Plata 1897.

ADDENDA

The above paper had already been printed when I received the following supplementary information which I here append and for which I am indebted to Professor V. L. Grottanelli, Professor M. Gusinde and Mrs. A. Pohlhausen.

Lloyd mentions that "the strange habit of standing like the water bird, on one leg with the other foot resting on its knee, is a common sight amongst Bari and Acholi alike". Still more interesting is his statement: "I have seen this practice amongst many of the Congo natives, who for hours would stand in this way with the help of a stick, looking out on the waters of the great river."⁶⁵ My evidence from the Congo is slight and it is therefore a pity that Lloyd does not name the tribes to which he alludes.

Schebesta has a photograph of a Kenta boy standing on his left leg with the other foot against its knee (nothing in the text). The Kenta are a small sub-group of Semangs in north Perak and Kedah, and when Schebesta was in Malaya 1924—1925 they numbered only 130 persons.⁶⁶

From the Nambicuara (Cabishi) Indians of the upper Guaporé River in Brazil I have evidence in the form of a photograph showing a man standing on his right leg and supporting himself with a bunch of ~~spears~~ in his left hand.⁶⁷

65 1911

SUMMARY

In the above paper I have unfortunately been obliged to repeat the words "nothing in the text" far too frequently. In point of fact the

⁶⁵ A. B. Lloyd, *Uganda to Khartum*, 281. London 1911.

⁶⁶ P. Schebesta, *Bei den Urwaldzwerge von Malaya*, 184. Leipzig 1927. See also the photograph facing p. 176.

⁶⁷ C. Lévi-Strauss, in *Handbook of South American Indians*, 3, Pl. 37, p. 371. Washington 1948.

evidence collected in this paper consists largely of photographs of the one-leg resting position without any mention of it in the paper in question. Furthermore the evidence has frequently been discovered rather unexpectedly in small articles, while large monographs have nothing to say about this resting position, a fact already observed by Schilde.

The "Nilotenstellung" is, as a matter of fact, only known to be practised by males, from young boys to old men. It appears to be most wide-spread in Africa, but it also occurs in the Near East and among the Naga, at least among the Konyak, among the Veddas in Ceylon, in China, among the Semang, on Celebes, among the Papua in New Guinea, in Australia, South America and even in Europe (gypsies). My examples outside Africa are rather isolated but their number could certainly be increased by a further study of literature, especially on South America.

As has already been mentioned in the introduction it probably makes no difference which leg is stood on. No mention is made as to whether it is possible to stand on one leg for any great length of time, but according to reports from the White Nile area it is possible to rest in this manner for several hours. In this area, as well as among Somal groups, this resting position is stated to be the men's favourite attitude of rest. According to E. Nordenskiöld it is usual among the Huari Indians of South America whereas Wassén does not consider it to be usual among the Chocó Indians. General statements of this kind are, however, uncommon and as a rule we are unfortunately not told whether the "Nilotenstellung" is characteristic of a people or whether it is only used by way of exception.

If we consider the cultural status of the people who use this resting position we find that it is most common among the shepherds who watch their flocks, but there is also evidence that it exists among tillers of the soil, hunters and food-gatherers (the Babongo, the Ndorobo, the Veddas and the natives of Australia). The position is assumed in repose or expectation of something — by listeners or spectators — irrespective of cultural status. It is impossible, with the information at our disposal, to distinguish any social differences among those who assume this resting position.

The only information I possess on this resting position in connection *with rites* comes from Africa, from three tribes there: the Korekore,

the Angoni and the Bayaka (see above). I cannot give any explanation but I should like to call the reader's attention to the Bailas' one-legged spirit Luwe, a great hunter who rides through the forest on an eland antelope.⁶⁸ Comparison should also be made with the Nandi's one-legged "devil" Chemos (with the definite article *chemosit*),⁶⁹ and one-legged ogres in East African folklore.⁷⁰ Above in this paper we have also seen how, during the rites connected with circumcision, the Bayaka boys stand on one leg singing to the sun at sunrise. With this ceremony we might compare the initiation rites for boys among the natives of Australia when the boys should resemble the one-legged lunar (moon) spirit who was the first man and the father of the tribe.⁷¹

I have attempted to compile my African evidence on this resting position as geographically as possible (map, fig. 16), while Schilde in his distribution map has also attempted to take into consideration the racial kinship of the peoples in question. He puts forward the possibility — and here we must bear in mind the ancient Hamitic migratory routes for peoples and culture elements from the East: southwards through East Africa and westwards south of the Sahara — that there is Nilotic blood in the peoples that practise the one-leg resting position. Much points to the fact that, to a certain extent, the Nilotic peoples followed the Hamitic migratory routes. The Baila and the Kwanyama, who both practise the "Nilotenstellung" are considered to have both racial and cultural traits of Nilotic character. Moreover, the Nilotic strain extends not only southwards, but also far westwards from the White Nile area.

Schilde maintains, in a rather striking manner, the possibility that the one-leg resting position in Africa can be attributed to elements of Nilotic blood and Nilotic migrations. If, however, we are to believe that this culture element has spread through Africa by means of migrations or loans, it seems to me that we might just as well consider that the Hamitic peoples (Eastern Hamitic peoples) or, according to von Eichstedt the "Aethiopiden", and other peoples influenced by the Hamitic peoples are the spreaders. Our resting position is not unusual

⁶⁸ E. W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, II, 131. London 1920.

⁶⁹ A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi*, 41. Oxford 1909.

⁷⁰ G. Lindblom, *Kamba Folklore*, II, 39, 131. *Archives d'Etudes Orientales* 20: 2. Lund 1935.

⁷¹ P. W. Schmidt, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, III, 1029. Münster i. W. 1931.

among them and their influence is known to have extended much farther than that of the Nilotic peoples, who, moreover, have absorbed a fair amount of Hamitic blood. In the Soudan the Hamitic influence must have extended much further westwards than that of the Nilotic peoples.

Although in many parts of Africa our resting position appears in conjunction with (East) Hamitic and also with Nilotic culture elements, I still doubt that it can have spread either by means of migrations or loans. If this had really been the case it should be found among the Zulus and other South East African peoples with Hamitic strains, but the fact remains that it is not to be found among them.

The fact that the Nilotenstellung is found in India and among gypsies in Europe, whose ancestors came from India, would appear to corroborate the opinion that there is a connection between the "Nilotenstellung" and racial conditions. This position is, however, probably practised in other parts of Europe. For instance a lady in Stockholm told me that her sister — a tall, long-legged girl and good gymnast — who, even when she was rather grown-up, used to assume a resting position on one leg. She did not actually rest the sole of the foot but the knee of the uplifted leg against the other knee. Schilde seems to consider (pp. 131, 132) that the "Nilotenstellung" is connected with slim, tall people and he is probably right where Africa is concerned but, as we have already observed, this position is also found among the Veddas and Semangs, both of short stature. In consideration of the fact that this position is also found in South America I find it difficult to associate it with any special race, and its appearance in South America can scarcely be associated with the Old World provided we do not assume that the ancestors of the Indians in South America practised it in their aboriginal home somewhere in East Asia (which in itself does not seem unreasonable). Moreover, if this were the case the resting position should also occur in parts of Central and North America, but it is unknown there.

It is difficult to decide whether our resting position depends on diffusion or whether it is an independent invention, I am inclined to side with the latter alternative. In any case I find it difficult, in this connection, to link together South America and the Old World.

It is also difficult to account for the origin of this resting position. It is obviously no attempt to imitate wading-birds that stand on one

leg. Among many of the African peoples who use this position, the men also rest by squatting on their heels, and this squatting position which, in itself, requires a certain skill in the act of balancing, might facilitate and encourage standing on one leg. Women (who seldom or never stand on one leg) usually sit on the ground with outstretched legs. It would, however, be rather hazardous to deduce the one-leg standing position from the squatting position since both in Africa and America there are people that squat on their heels but never stand on one leg. The Swedish physician Sten Reuterskiöld, who is both well-informed about and interested in ethnography, said in reply to my questions that he wondered whether the one-leg resting position was not a question of training, depending on flexible limbs, how the children sit and lie etc.

To sum up: I must leave it to other research workers, including physical anthropologists and race experts, to try to explain the cause and origin of the one-leg resting position. The material collected in this paper may possibly be of use as a basis for further investigations into this question.

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